

1917]

BARRETT, THE WASHO INDIANS.

9

Each village or unit is presided over by an hereditary chief, 622
called teüb'ë'yū, whose duties are to call his people together for
ceremonies, feasts, and other special purposes, and to adjudicate
disputes. In former times this office passed in the direct male line [692]
to the eldest son. More recently the office has been filled, to some [428]
extent at least, by selection of the most likely individual as a [178]
chief's successor regardless of relationship.

It is said that there is but one other official, the "rabbit boss" 624
or hunting chief. This office is discussed in speaking of the rabbit
hunt.

SOCIAL CUSTOMS.

No special customs concerning birth were noted except that the 844
father usually gives presents to anyone to whom he sees fit. On 431
the other hand no presents are given by others to the father,
mother or to the new born babe.

In former times polygamy was practiced, there being no re- 595
strictions placed upon a man as to whom his second or other
succeeding wife should be. On the other hand, monogamy was
quite as prevalent as polygamy.

No special ceremony was required for marriage, according to 585
informants. Even an exchange of presents was optional.

Upon death, cremation was formerly practiced. Nowadays 764
the body is buried. There is no stated period of mourning, but [178]
there is an annual mourning ceremony, or "cry," accompanied by 765
a big feast. 769

PERSONAL ADORNMENT.

The men formerly wore a clout and belt, and had, when neces- 291
sary for warmth, or when desired for adornment, a buckskin or
other skin blanket thrown over the upper part of the body. Inform-
ants state that there was no shirt or coat-like garment worn by the
men.

The women, on the other hand, wore a sinew-sewed waist and [513]
a separate skirt, both of buckskin. The most universal and persist-

[P. 378. A]

764 The dispute between the widow and the sister mentioned
[578] earlier was an argument as to whether the deceased would be buried in one of these sites or in the cemetery at Stewart, Nevada.

A white man who has lived in the area for ninety years, reported that as a boy he often came across caches of belongings of dead Indians in the mountains.
[178] Today, prized possessions are either crowded into the casket with the body or burned or secreted in some remote area of the Sierra.

Funeral ceremonies were apparently simple. The body was wrapped and carried into the hills to be interred. Prayers in the form of a short speech were directed toward the dead. "We are burying you because you are dead. It's not because we are mad at you or don't like you. But you are dead. Please don't come back and bother us."
[782]

Widows traditionally cut their hair in mourning, a custom which is still practiced. Stewart reports that mourners painted their faces black. My informants denied this, but one elaborated. "I remember when I was a little girl old Indians who had lost someone would cry a lot and let the tears run down their faces and not wash their faces until they were real dirty and black with fire smoke." Crying at a funeral was expected and in fact positively sanctioned. At a funeral conducted while I was present the sheriff arrested a drunken Washo who was wailing quite loudly. The Indians were all bitter about this because: "All of us cry at a funeral whether we are drunk or not. That's the way the Washo do it." (This funeral was that of a murder victim and the sheriff was present because he feared there might be a reprisal attempt.)
765
[302]
[178]
764
[526]
[627]

A newspaper report of a funeral in Genoa, Nevada, in the late 1880's records that the Indians had borrowed a wagon from a white man to transport the corpse (that of a well-known Indian woman) to the burying ground. The wagon was followed by a large crowd of weeping mourners.

Modern funerals usually take place under the auspices of a funeral director, and generally services are performed by a Christian minister from the Stewart Indian agency. After the white minister has left, it is usual for an older Indian to approach the casket and repeat the old funeral prayers. The reason for waiting until the minister leaves is to avoid hurting his feelings. My informants said the prayers made the older Indians feel more comfortable. It is usually not necessary to burn the deceased's home, but his belongings are disposed of. There is an increasing tendency to tend graves and put flowers on them. The cemetery at Stewart appears to be well decorated with flowers. Two old Indian graves near Lake Tahoe are regularly visited and jars of flowers placed on them.
764
178
[797]
[768]
769
178

When the husband of one of my informants died,

[648]

"The concern for these particular graves may be in part motivated by the fact that they are a focal point in a Washo land claim. Because of California law concerning cemeteries, the Indians contend that the tourist camp presently on the site is there illegally and that the land is theirs. Thus far the camp operator has been opposed from removing or desecrating the graves, but the Indians' claim has not been considered.

RELIGION AND SOCIETY.

The adolescence dance for girls was practiced, perhaps in a Shoshonean guise, since neither the valley Maidu, the hill Miwok, nor the Yokuts make this dance in developed form. 535 177

Some form of mourning anniversary was held—"cry" is its English name in vogue—but all details are lacking. 769

The chief, *teubeyu*, succeeded in the male line. At marriage an exchange of gifts is said to have been optional. As among the Northern Paiute, there evidently was no bride purchase, even in form. The dead were cremated. 622 583 764

It is clear that some real information on the Washo is highly desirable. 114

THE PERSISTENCE OF ABORIGINAL CEREMONIES AMONG THE WASHO INDIANS

by Stanley A. and Ruth S. Freed

In the 1950's the Washo were observing, in modified form, five of their six aboriginal ceremonies. These were the ceremonies at birth, girl's puberty, death, the shaman's curing rite and the annual pinenut dance. The dance and ceremonies before a war party set out and after its return apparently disappeared shortly after the beginning of permanent white settlement due to the suppression of warfare by whites. Of the five surviving ceremonies, three were rites of passage regularly observed whenever circumstances made them appropriate: the ceremonies at birth, girl's puberty and death. These three ceremonies give every indication of surviving for the foreseeable future. The other two ceremonies, the pinenut dance and the shaman's curing rite, appear to be on the verge of extinction. The annual pinenut dance had already essentially disappeared by 1952; and the shaman's curing rite probably will have disappeared by the early 1960's. This paper will describe the five ceremonies that have survived into the 1950's and will discuss possible reasons why three seem capable of survival while two are on the point of disappearance. (121)

The descriptions of aboriginal Washo ceremonies are reconstructions based on the testimony of our informants and on earlier published reports. Hank Pete claimed he was born in 1882; Bertha Holbrook said her year of birth was 1885. Nancy Emm did not give her age but she appeared to be as old as Holbrook. Mooney (1928, 20) considers 1845 as the end of the aboriginal period in the region; the first permanent white settlement was in 1851. This means that when our informants were children some Washo were still living who were familiar with the relatively undisturbed Washo culture. Hank Pete's grandmother was alive when he was a boy, and he apparently learned a good deal from her. The most useful sources on aboriginal Washo ceremonies are Curtis (1926), Lowie (1939), and Stewart (1941). Cartwright (1955) has described a modern girl's puberty dance; Freed and Freed (1963) have described the shaman's curing rite. (174, 124, 796, 127)

The Washo may have had an annual mourning ceremony but the evidence for its existence is scanty. Barrett (1917, 9) states "... there is an annual mourning ceremony, or 'cry,' accompanied by a big feast." He gives no further details. Curtis (1926, 97) reports "Annually there was a memorial ceremony which appears to have closely paralleled the California rite. Objects were burned while the people wailed, and a feast was provided by the chief. Effigies of the lamented dead are said to have been burned, as in

2 [footnotes appear on p. 39--Analyst] (769, 114)

769

114

southern California; but since the statement came in answer to direct inquiry and no further details were forthcoming, its truth cannot be accepted without further evidence." None of the other investigators among the Washo has found evidence of an annual mourning ceremony. Our informants did not report it.

Birth Ceremonies

843

844

(854)

846

844

(842)

(828)

Women were active during pregnancy and there were no special observances before birth. When the baby was born, it was bathed, wrapped with its arms at its sides, and placed in a winnowing basket (modal). Bertha Holbrook says that the baby was not bathed again until the umbilical cord fell off. Stewart (1941, 408) says the baby was bathed about every five days and placed in a new basket after each bath. The afterbirth was arranged with the umbilical cord inside and buried upright. Stewart (1941, 408) says the afterbirth was wrapped in bark before burial. The Washo believed that if the afterbirth was buried upside down the woman would have no more children. The baby's umbilical cord was kept moistened and was wrapped with ground pinenut bark. When it fell off it was tied to a stick and this in turn was tied to the right side of the winnowing basket. The Washo believed that this would make the baby right-handed.

846

(431)

(751)

(461)

(431)

The husband went to a stream and bathed after the birth. He left a present beside the stream which anyone could come and take. Lowie (1939, 305) reports that after the birth the husband gave some man a buckskin, which helped to keep disease away from the infant. Until the cord fell off, the husband took a cold bath every morning; was not supposed to sleep at night; ate no meat, salt or grease; did not gamble or smoke (Stewart, 1941, 409); and was constantly working. The husband's incessant activity was to make the child industrious in later life. When the cord fell off, the mother announced it. Then the husband went hunting, killed some animal, and distributed it in his household. On this day any nonrelative could come and help himself to the property of the husband. After the cord had fallen off, the husband returned to normal life and could again eat meat, salt and grease.

(834)

(514)

For a month after the birth, the mother did not bathe; ate no meat, grease, or salt; drank only warm water; used a scratching stick (Stewart, 1941, 408); and she and her husband had no sexual intercourse. Stewart (1941, 409) says the couple was continent for from six to 12 months. For two weeks the mother lay tightly covered upon a warm bed. The bed was made by digging a shallow ditch, putting hot sand and ashes in it, and covering it with grass. She did not leave the house during this time, even to relieve herself. The Washo believed that the woman had to be cured inside after a birth and that the hot bed and food taboos aided in draining out the bad blood.

Washo NT30
Achomawi NS5

BOY'S PUBERTY

N
881

2382. Ki: Deer intestines wrapped on hoop which is passed over youth.

DEATH CUSTOMS

N
764
[172]

2402. K: Miss Bowler, Indian agent of Nevada, told of a burial that was unearthed near Nixon during the construction of a road. The body was flexed. Indian went on strike until skeleton properly reburied.

A
[764]

2412. Paviotso: "The bodies of warriors were cremated, others were buried" (Curtis, 81). Wa: + (Curtis, 97). AE: Body is carried to mountains where a grave is dug. The fire is built over the hole so that the ashes and remains fall into it and are covered with rocks and dirt.

N
[766]

2416. Ku: Witches cremated or thrown to coyotes.

N
[775]2417. Wa: + (Curtis, 97).
2421. Ki: Speech by old man or brother of deceased tells spirit to remain in land of dead so that living will not be bothered.N
[768]

2425a. Ki: + (Kelly, 168): said house torn down and transferred more frequently than destroyed.

N
[777]

2429. Paviotso: "Usually a man's entire property was distributed among his relatives" (Curtis, 82).

N
784

2433. Ku: "It is bad luck to ever burn hair clippings, old clothes, and the like. Just throw them away." Paviotso: Hair buried with dead (Hopkins, quoted by Lowie, 283).

W
[769]

2450. Paviotso: + (Curtis, 82).

2453. Wa: + (Curtis, 97).

RELIGION

ShamanN
756
787

2471. Ki: Not only must the boy act in accordance with the dream he receives, but his parents also must follow the instruction the boy receives for them. If dream tells parents to paint their faces before breakfast and they do not, the boy will become sick, will die, because parents do not believe. An old shaman tells parents of conditions. If a boy's dream forbids playing with a gun, its barrel will become soft, droop, and curve down.

N
756

2473. Ku: "Shaman's powers are sometimes inherited from father to son" (Lowie, 294).

2477. At: In addition to power through dreams a boy wishing to be a shaman could learn the "doctoring" from an old shaman while acting as his assistant. Even if boy dreamed power he was taught some by old doctors.

N
756
781

2478. Paviotso: "Annie says in the Walker River district there was a mountain where people went in quest of a vision" (Lowie, 294). Ki: + (Kelly, 190): but rarely. AE: Each boy was

[p.443 (A)]